

My name is Dennis O'Brien. I am currently a member of your extended review panel and have recently resigned from the Russian River Watershed Council in order to pursue graduate studies. I have reviewed your California Water Plan Update 2005 and submit the following comments.

The Plan highlights two points that are essential to any water management plan, be it statewide or regional: establishing a water balance and determining the extent and rate of use of groundwater. I wholeheartedly endorse such priorities, as would a majority of the members of the RRWC.

Unfortunately, these priorities are not shared by many of the water managers in the North Coast region. Some are deterred by abstract political philosophies, e.g., groundwater is each landowners individual right and any efforts to measure/control it are government interference. Others, especially those in the Russian and Eel River basins, are so caught up in fighting over how much water is imported/exported that even determining basic facts gets pushed aside. The most recent example is the list of projects submitted for funding under Proposition 50. Not one of them seeks to determine the water balance for the Russian River watershed, the North Coast area facing the greatest population and development pressures. Mr. Randy Poole, manager of the Sonoma County Water Agency, went so far as to state that determining the extent and rate of use of groundwater throughout the watershed would "never happen."

For the California Water Plan to succeed, such information must be obtained and incorporated into any regional water management plan. Your draft plan literally glosses over the lack of such information. Until the state is able to convince local/regional water managers that such information is essential, your Plan will never achieve its goals. To the extent you can, I encourage you to reject those projects submitted for any kind of funding that do not first establish a water balance and determine the extent and rate of use of groundwater. To do otherwise would be contrary to all scientific analysis to date and would instead further the local water wars that have brought us the current crisis.

Thank you very much for all of your work, including your outreach. We are all in this together, and it's time we started acting like it.